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**The Impact of Incongruent vs. Congruent Food Brand
Pairings**

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**The Impact of Incongruent vs. Congruent Food Brand
Pairings**

by

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Thesis

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Marc-Andre Parent and Lisette Malenfant, who were the first to give me the thirst for new knowledge and the potential to seek it, to my older siblings Veronique and Stevens Parent, for showing me that it is possible to chase your dreams, to my cousin Erica McGinn who is my partner-in-crime and my source of trust and confidence in anything, to my aunt Karen Beauchemin who encouraged me to get my master's degree and strive for excellence, and to my dear friends Emilie Dion, Jeremy Webb, Benjamin Shaw and Jordan DiReda, whose friendship is the greatest gift of my life.

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The Impact of Incongruent vs. Congruent Food Brand Pairings

by

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University of Texas at Austin, 2016

SUPERVISOR: Angeline Close

The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the effect of congruity within a food brand constellation on consumer attitudes, positive electronic word-of-mouth, and willingness to pass along via social media. The empirical context focuses on food brands that tend to be traditionally consumed while watching sport. The study of congruity within brand constellations is important as food companies spend large sums of money on endorsers in their message promotions. After watching a short video on baseball, a sample of 250 students was shown two fake food brands stimuli ads, one featuring a congruent pairing (chips and soda) and the other, incongruent (chips and kale smoothie). The findings suggest that congruent pairings lead to better positive brand attitudes and positive word-of-mouth towards the combined brand and that incongruent pairings incur more pass-along on social media.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars have demonstrated the crucial role of congruity between attitudes towards a source and attitudes towards a message (Rifon et al., 2004). However, this paper will study the impact of congruity between two elements in the same food brand constellation and how this will motivate the audience to adapt his or her attitude towards the congruity or incongruity of their pairing. So far, using a balance theory framework, research has shown the relationship between two separate individuals and a brand. This study is different because it will discuss the relationship between one consumer and two brands found in the same brand constellation.

Consumers prefer to spend time with those that are similar to them in many ways (Solomon, 1988). Consumers tend to gravitate around those who act and think like them (Solomon, 1988). Consumers seek consistency in their social interactions; they attempt to interpret, explain and predict their peers' behavior and they are uncomfortable when they fail to do so (Heider, 1946). Balance Theory shows that consumers prefer balance (i.e., consistency) in their interpersonal relations, which can result in a behavioral change from liking to disliking person or the concept being affirmed (Heider, 1946). However, theorists in advertising and marketing have moved away from Balance Theory in favor of the related Congruity Theory (Lorimor & Dunn, 1968; Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). This is because Balance Theory lacks the consideration of a persuasion source that makes a claim about an attitude object (Lorimor & Dunn, 1968). Whereas Balance Theory

relates only to two people and an attitude object, Congruity Theory relates to an attitude object, a source that makes a claim, and an audience (Lorimor & Dunn, 1968).

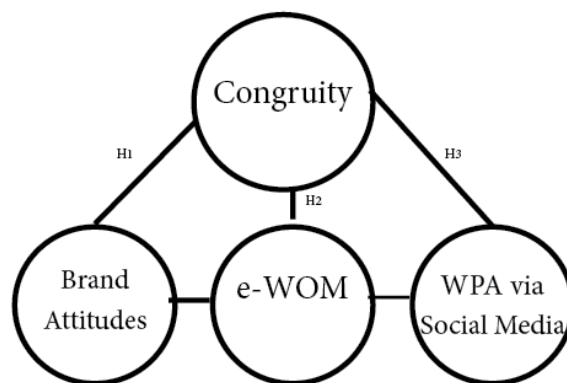
Congruity theory (Lorimor & Dunn, 1968; Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955), oriented to communication and persuasion, like Balance Theory, also holds that incongruity is unpleasant and that incongruity motivates audiences to change their attitudes. For instance, if an audience likes a specific endorser, and that same endorser makes a claim about a product, the audience is more likely to accept the claim than reject it to maintain consistency and congruity in their interaction with the endorser. What has not been shown as much in research is a situation where there is no endorser, or when the endorser is a brand rather than a spokesperson. One can wonder if individuals will attempt to maintain the same consistency in their relation with a brand if that brand sponsors another.

What has been done to explain this relationship is current research on brand constellations, which revealed that in order to reach certain consumption goals, consumers often consume brands in a bundle (Solomon, 1988). Customers adopt brand constellation consumption habits in various goal-derived categories where they see a perceived fit both on the product and brand level.

Research has advanced that customers reject product constellations with a low product fit. However, research has not shown if these results apply to a food brand constellation in which the product level is the same but where degrees of congruity may vary.

The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the effect of congruity within a food brand constellation on consumer attitudes, positive electronic word-of mouth, and willingness to pass along via social media. The empirical context focuses on food brands that tend to be traditionally consumed while watching sport. The study of congruity within brand constellations is important as food companies spend large sums of money on endorsers in their message promotions. The findings of this project could show that the pairing of two brands in a brand constellation could enhance online consumer behaviors supporting brands. This research is also important to scholars and managers because it will reveal if and the extent to which congruity or incongruity generates more positive electronic word-of-mouth and willingness to pass along information about a pair of brands on social media. This way, brands looking for co-sponsorships can adjust the nature of their partnership based on their social media goals.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



The remainder of this paper is as follows. Next is a literature review and theoretical background, which supports the ensuing hypotheses. Following is the methods, results, and discussion including limitations, implications for theory and practice, and avenues for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Balance Theory

The balance theory is a cognitive framework that explains how an individual perceives others around him and aims for cognitive consistency (Heider, 1946). As the name of the theory stipulates it, individuals attempt to maintain balance, or cognitive consistency, rather than contradiction in their perception of others. The model shows a triad of elements: a person, another person and another entity. For example, it could be a man, his neighbor and a food brand. Balance is defined by the relationship between any of those two elements together. In the example provided, if the two neighbors have similar views on neighborhood matters, they are likely to establish a positive neighbor relationship and thus get to a balance situation. In a different situation, if the man in the example did not like his neighbor to begin with, he would alter his opinion on neighborhood matters to achieve balance among the cognitions. Thus, the balance is attained when all three relationships are positive or when two of the relationships are negative and one of them is positive.

Balance Theory has been extended to many domains of research interest. One area that is relevant to this paper is Basil and Herr's (2006) contribution on the effects of

pre-existing organizational attitudes on consumer response to cause-related marketing (CRM) alliances, using a Balance Theory framework. Balanced attitudes results from perceptions of appropriateness, but did not necessarily lead to positive effects (Basil & Herr, 2006). If pre-existing values are both positive, a synergistic attitudinal boost occurred. Attitudinal contamination happens when pre-existing attitude towards either element (brand or cause) was negative.

Within Balance Theory, perceptual fit operates to balance the equation and enhance perceptions of the strength of the CRM alliance, which led to more positive responses. Fit has been addressed in the branding literature. A good fit between a brand extension and the firm's current brand offerings (Aaker & Keller, 1990), and similarity, typicality, or relatedness between the extension and the core brand (Bottomley & Holden, 2001) foster more favorable consumer attitudes toward a brand extension. According to Basil and Herr, the organizations that benefit the most from CRM are the ones that need it the least. A firm may not overcome negative attitudes by forming a CRM alliance. Fit is crucial for CRM alliances to be seen as appropriate. When there is not an obvious fit, managers must use articulation, or create promotional messages that both interpret the fit and communicate the sponsorship linkage. If a corporation endorses a well-liked event, then the corporation will result with enhanced community relations (Dean, 2002).

So far, using a balance theory framework, research has shown the relationship between two separate individuals and a brand. This study is different because it will discuss the relationship between one consumer and two brands found in the same brand constellation. In the context of this study, the triad can comprise the following elements

attempting to reach a balance or cognitive consistency: the consumer, the sponsor brand, and the sponsored brand found in the same food brand constellation.

Congruity Theory

Congruity Theory is a cognitive consistency theory in psychology that was developed to improve on Fritz Heider's balance theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955). It particularly relates to the domain of research of this paper since it focuses on communication and persuasion. The congruity framework uses different elements in its triad: a message source, a concept and an audience. Osgood and Tannenbaum quantified two of the three relationships in Heider's triad: the degree of liking of the audience for the source and the audience's attitude toward the concept. Congruity Theory is used in situations in which a source makes an assumption about a claim and the audience has attitudes towards both the source and the concept. Similar to what the balance theory encompasses, the claim that the source makes about the concept has to be either positive or negative. Congruity theory stipulates that imbalance, or incongruity, is unpleasant to the audience and thus, the audience will be motivated to change their attitudes in an incongruity situation (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955).

Congruity Theory, in many ways, is an extension of Balance theory; thus, this work will rely on Congruity Theory. First of all, it can predict that incongruity can change the audience's attitude towards the source and the concept. Congruity theory was the first theory to show that attitude towards the source could change as well. It also

showed that more polarized attitudes (which can be translated into stronger stands on certain matters) tend to change less than neutral or moderate attitudes. Finally, Congruity Theory touches on why certain messages are not persuasive. It showed that if a message makes an unreasonable claim, it will not be persuasive. A limitation of Congruity Theory is that it ignores everything about a message except whether or not the source is in favor of the message (Rifon et al., 2004).

Congruity theory has been extended to many domains of research interest. With regards to branding, sponsorship credibility and positive consumer attitudes result from perceptions of altruistic sponsorships between the sponsor and the cause (Rifon et al., 2004). A company can enhance its image by sponsoring a cause that is congruent to its offerings; in fact, if attitudes towards a company are already good than sponsoring a cause that is not congruent to them will not necessarily hurt them (Rifon et al., 2004).

Brand Constellations

Product usage and consumption activities can be used as data to infer someone's lifestyle, personality, and social role (Solomon, 1988). To decode this data, one must read through the tangible possessions, leisure activities, and purchased services of a target. Certain goods are particularly rich in symbolic meaning hence why people make assumptions about others based on their own customer experience or perception of those same goods. Thus, the consumption habits of a subject in a given social role society can outline what this person consumes in general. This allows subjects to expect similar consumption habits from other people occupying the same social role (Solomon, 1988).

This goes to show that consumers use sets of consumption stimuli to define themselves and categorize their peers better. In a product constellation, goods and services assemble in a cluster to create symbolic value about the consumer's status. In many cases, customers will purchase specific products in order to attain their aspired social status and avoid others brands or product types for the same reason (Solomon, 1988). For example, it is more likely for a young professional wanting to look successful to buy a brand new muscle car than a second-hand minivan (Solomon, 1988).

Consumers select a brand that best fulfills a specific consumption goal (Lange, 2005). However, brands are not always chosen individually and that in some cases, more than one brand is necessary to attain goal fulfillment (Lange, 2005). Brand constellation choice can be defined as the choice of at least two complementary brands (Lange, 2005). Competition between constellations creates a large number of product categories. Therefore, goal-derived categorization is highly regarded to understand how brands from different product categories compete with each other in constellations (Barsalou, 1983; Day et al., 1979, as cited in Lange, 2005).

A famous brand constellation example is the marketing-induced pairing of Coca Cola and Big Mac at McDonalds (Dreze and Hoch, 1998, as cited in Lange, 2005). In other cases, consumers fabricate constellations themselves by making idiosyncratic combinations of their favorite brands (Fournier, 1998, as cited in Lange, 2005). Previous research has covered the importance of the perceived fit between the elements (Solomon and Englis, 1994, as cited in Lange, 2005) at both brand and product level and goes along

the same lines as research done on brand extensions, brand alliances, and brand constellations.

Brand constellations are most attractive when both brands from typical product categories and are both liked individually (Lange, 2005). Brands from atypical product categories and brands that are less popular can also be successfully added to a constellation (Lange, 2005). In a constellation setting, less typical products become more attractive due to their complementarity with more typical products (Lange, 2005).

In addition to enhanced attractiveness to consumers, the benefits of bundling two strong brands in a constellation are minimal (Lange, 2005). In some cases, consumers infer a congruent relationship between two products that are from different categories but serve the same goal (Lange, 2005). Otherwise, educating through messaging is necessary when a congruent fit is not as obvious (e.g. show how snack foods can enhance the consumption of a beverage).

Weaker brands and new brands (stemming from new product introductions) can benefit greatly from partnering up with a stronger brand in joint advertising contexts requiring high involvement (Samu et al., 1999). In other words, their findings were particularly relevant in contexts where consumers have the ability, motivation and opportunity to elaborate on an advertisement. Their work highlights the importance of complementarity, which led to brand awareness. For example, if a brand is seeking rapid acceptance to reap first-mover advantages then a complementary product is the best partner.

With regards to personality, brand attachment and brand following, brand constellations can form on consumers' emotional traits (Flight and Coker, 2013). The sum of one consumer's personal traits will reflect his or her self-image which act as 'sets of consumption stimuli (Solomon, 1988, cited in Flight and Coker, 2013). In other words, consumers are seeking brands that reflect their personalities across a plethora of product categories. The practical application of this finding is that brands can look for co-branding opportunities using psychographics rather than demographic or geographic means with minimal input. Therefore, rather than trying to associate psychological traits to brands, they should pair brands that attract customers with similar psychographics.

Sponsorships

A sponsorship is the acquisition of rights to affiliate or associate with a product, event, or organization for the purpose of incurring benefits (Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2000). Previous research has shown that consumers recall products better if they are related to their sponsor (Johan, Pham and Tuan, 1999) and if they already had positive attitudes towards that product prior to the sponsorship (Nicholls, Roslow, and Dubish, 1999).

Brands can benefit from creating a vast portfolio of sponsorships to capitalize on the pairings formed with the encompassed brands but it can adversely result in a weaker primary brand hence the importance for brand managers to select sponsorships that are logically connected such as salient property characteristics or overlapping exposure to different targets. Balance should be attained between loosely connected sponsors that

dilute the desired personality of a portfolio and closely related sponsors that can create some unexpected brand personality (Chien, et al., 2011),

One way to avoid these issues is to identify conflicting traits between the new sponsor and the brand's existing portfolio prototype (Chien, et al. 2011). To facilitate information processing and vehicle a clear portfolio identity, brand managers may design messages that outline the shared personality traits between categorically unrelated sponsorships found in the same brand portfolio. In the context of marketing alliances resulting in co-branding, sponsorships and brand placement, personality spikes and troughs are important when analyzing the compatibility of two brands because combining entities with opposing traits can cancel out each other's personality and wash out the desired image creation of the sponsorship portfolio. Sport marketing refers to sponsorships or event marketing involving athletes or an athletic event (Close et al., 2006). Sport marketing represents a vast majority of sponsorships in the United States, as close to two-thirds of sponsorships are associated with athletic events (Mi-Megasite, 2006).

Prior research on sports sponsorships has touched on exposure. It revealed that consumers remember sponsors who promote athletic events and form more favorable attitudes towards brands sponsoring sporting events or engaging in sports marketing (Bennett, Cunningham, and Dees, 2006). Previous research has also addressed the importance of the perceptual fit between the sponsor and the event sponsored (Gi-Yong, Quarterman, and Flynn, 2006). Event sponsorship is used to further the consumer's engagement with the sponsor's products by establishing community involvement, which

implicates affect, emotion and cognition (Close et al., 2006). Event attendees that are enthusiastic and active in sports usually pay more attention to corporate involvement in the sporting community. They will have a more positive attitude towards the sponsor brand and are more likely to purchase the sponsor's product (Close et al., 2006). Along the same lines, attendees that already have knowledge about the sponsor and their product set will be more engaged with that sponsor. Because of the presence of such motivated attendees, sports and event marketing provides a great opportunity for companies to educate consumers about their offerings (Close et al., 2006). Therefore, it can be an opportunity to introduce a product offering that consumers are less familiar with (Close et al., 2006).

Product Meaning

Scholars show that consumers use products to project their identity (e.g., Ferraro, Kirmani and Matherly, 2013; Schau & Gilly, 2003). Product meaning has value because of what a particular product or brand communicates about the possessor (Douglas & Isherwod, 1979). In addition to that, products can create value for an individual due to the roles that possessions play in molding and mirroring the self (Belk, 1988; Grubb & Grathwol, 1967) or the self that they aim to project. Therefore, if a target consumes brands similar to another individual, it is likely that they will be perceived as similar to them, but if they consume a different brand or product it will result in perceptions of dissimilarity. As such, it is likely that individuals will interact and have relationships with those that are similar to them with regards to the products and brands that they consume,

since products are used to mirror other characteristics such as personality, social class and values and that individuals tend to form homophilous relationships upon similar brand consumption.

Consumer attitudes towards brands

Brands can act on many levels of abstraction and that a group of emotions can be linked to a certain product (Thellefsen and Sørensen, 2013). However, it is not the concrete product that is thought of but rather the emotional impact imposed by the brand upon the customer. Once the meaning is agreed on by both the consumers and the company, it becomes a public matter and the relationship between the brand and the consumer becomes part of the impression formation process (Thellefsen and Sørensen, 2013).

H₁: *The greater the degree of congruity between a consumer's evaluation of two brands in the same food brand constellation, the more positive the audience's attitude will be towards the food brand constellation.*

Electronic Word-of Mouth (eWOM)

eWOM defines online person-to-person communication about a brand, product, service (Hsieh, Hsieg & Tang, 2012). It was facilitated by computer-mediated communication (Hsieh, Hsieg & Tang, 2012) and refers to user-generated content on the Internet (Chiu, et al., 2013). eWOM can take a plethora of forms such as viral marketing, online buzz, social networking, or peer-to-peer communication, and appears to be a continuing force in marketing communication (Henke, 2013). Some components are

essential for viral advertising to be effective. eWOM literature supports that perceived humor helps create engagement and has a significant positive impact towards an ad and on a consumer's intention to forward it (Hsieh, Hsieg & Tang, 2012). These findings come hand-in-hand with statistics that reveal that Internet users favor humorous online pictures or videos. Therefore research is moving towards identifying how practitioners can use humor to make their brand more interesting or appealing (Hsieh, Hsieg & Tang, 2012).

Perception of incongruity can be a source of humor in advertising and is often used to mask deceptive advertising (Hsieh, Hsieg & Tang, 2012, Shabbir & Thwaiters, 2007).

H₂: *The lesser the degree of congruity between a consumer's evaluation of two brands in the same food brand constellation, the more likely they will discuss the pairing on social media.*

Willingness to Pass along via Social Media

Understanding what motivates consumers to share content on social media is crucial since the action of passing along content is completely voluntary (Ho & Dempsey, 2010). Scholars agree that emotions play a role in whether or not a message goes viral but current findings on what emotions result in greater pass-along are inconsistent (Godes, et al., 2005). However, research has shown that ads with pleasant emotional tones are more likely to be passed along (Eckler and Bolls, 2011).

Ad messages providing higher utilitarian benefits such as information passing, entertainment or pleasure are also more likely to be forwarded (Chiu, Hsieh, Kao and Lee, 2007). For example, a study revealed that individuals were willing to share their cancer screening experience on social media if they thought the message would have a positive impact (Cutrona, et al., 2013). This can be linked to the need of being altruistic, which in this case can be translated into a desire to entertain or to educate (Phelps, et al., 2010) as some people share information as way of expressing love or friendship (Dichter, 1966). In addition to that, research has revealed that opinion leaders, in this case online consumers who share information on social media, are usually open to new experiences and willing to experiment with new products (Sun et al., 2006).

H₃: *The greater the degree of congruity between a consumer's evaluation of two brands in the same food brand constellation, the less willing the consumer will pass the marketing content along electronically.*

III. METHOD

Method Overview

To test the hypotheses, this experiment employed a 2×2 full factorial, between-subjects design with two different sponsorship brand conditions (i.e., incongruent food brand pairing vs. congruent food brand pairing) and two different affiliation conditions (i.e., high and low involvement) towards sports.

Participants were told that they participated in a study of sports experience and their only instructions were to watch a short video (about two minutes long) about the fastest pitch in Major League Baseball history to put them in context, after which they viewed two fictive ads. They were asked to watch the fictive ads for 60 seconds before being able to move further along the survey.

Then, participants were surveyed using a questionnaire. The questionnaire in this study was divided into three parts. The first part of the questionnaire asked about the subjects' perceived congruity between the two brands in the constellation (e.g., Zanga Chips and O So Da, Zanga Chips and K8L) (Speed & Thompson, 2000). In the second part, participants' consumer attitudes (Bruter, 1998), positive word-of-mouth (Gremier & Gwinner, 2000) and willingness to pass along towards the sponsor brand (Zanga Chips) and its sponsored brand (i.e., K8L or O So Da) was assessed (Sun *et al.*, 2006). Last, Participants' involvement with baseball and their demographics were assessed at the end of the questionnaire.

The results were analyzed with three independent samples t-tests. Note that this effect was hypothesized to test the effectiveness of congruity in food brand constellations

in the baseball event context on brand attitudes, positive electronic word-of-mouth and willingness to pass content along on social media.

Another manipulation was done to collapse scales since brands were surveyed individually rather than together in regards to brand attitudes (BA) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Therefore, a combined BA score was created for the soda + chip combo (e1, congruent combination) and for the kale smoothie + chips combo (e2, incongruent combination). Then these combined scores were compared. The same solution was used and analyzed for the eWOM scales. Therefore, a combined eWOM score was created for the soda + chip combo (e1, congruent combination) and for the kale smoothie + chips combo (e2, incongruent combination). However, the WPA scales were not taken individually; therefore, there was not any transformation necessary.

Sample and Procedure. A total of 282 undergraduate students above age 18 from The University of Texas at Austin were recruited from the subject pool in the Stan Richards School of Advertising and Public Relations. Students participate in the pool often as a part of a course requirement in many courses in the School. There was no other incentive to recruit them. After removing incomplete entries and respondents who did not watch the primer video, a total of 255 respondents remained. 21% of the respondents were Male and 79% were Female.

Measurement . This study used the fit scale developed by Speed and Thompson (2000) to evaluate the degree of sponsorship congruity between the sponsor brand (Zanga Chips) and its sponsee brands (O So Da and K&L).

This study used the positive WOM scale developed by Gremler and Gwinner (2000). However, due to the nature of the fictitious brands used in the study, some statements were rephrased. For example, “doing business with” was changed to “consume”. Also, only the first three statements were used; since the brands in the study are fake brands, it was decided to get rid of “I have actually recommended this product”. This study used the WPA scale developed by Sun, et al. (2006). The scale was created to study online willingness to pass along intention with the emphasis on emails. For the purpose of this study, some statements were rephrased. For example, “this email” was replaced by “this ad”.

This study used the brand attitude scale developed by Surendra N. Singh and Nancy Spears (2004), which was developed to measure both brand attitude and purchase intention. However, this study only used the brand attitude components of this scale in the survey, as it does not study purchase intention as an outcome.

This survey studied food pairings in the context of watching professional Baseball (Major League Baseball). The Fan Motivation Scale (Al-Thibiti, 2004) was used to assess the participants’ involvement with sport. Based on pre-test, the scale was too long and intensive so some items were cut; the measures that remained were items 3, 14, 16, 22 and 24.

Stimulus Development. To measure congruity in the context of Major League Baseball, three fictitious brands were created. The first one is potato chips named Zanga. Potato chips were selected because they appear to be a common snack option while attending or watching a baseball game. The name and category of the product is gender

neutral. Zanga chips fall under low-involvement products in the frequently purchased packaged goods category.

A soft drink named O So Da was selected for the same reasons as Zanga chips: a common beverage option while attending or watching a baseball game. The name and category of the product is gender neutral. Soft drinks fall under low-involvement products in the frequently purchased packaged goods category.

A kale smoothie named K8L was selected as an incongruent food item for this study. Vegetable based smoothies do not constitute a traditional drink consumers have while attending or watching a baseball game. The name and category of the product is gender neutral. Smoothies or juices fall under low-involvement products in the frequently purchased packaged goods category.

Pretest. A pretest was conducted to make sure the private investigator's perception of congruity was right and that the two pairings to be used in the thesis survey, indeed, had different levels of congruity, Zanga and O So Da being congruent and Zanga and K8L being incongruent. To do so, each fake brand's degree of congruity with the event was evaluated. The pretest uses two congruity scales, one to measure the congruence between the event and the product (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999) and another one to measure the congruence between the event and the sponsor (Speed & Thompson, 2000). A factor analysis showed that all the statements pertaining to the congruity between Major League Baseball (MLB) and K8L had the lowest congruity, compared to the ones about Zanga and MLB, and O So Da and MLB.

Participants. The pretest was taken by 66 respondents found on social media. After cleaning up the data by removing incomplete responses, 33 respondents remained and provided valid data for this pretest. Because the pretest only tested the congruity of the items found in the pairing, no demographics were provided by the pretest sample.

Procedure. Upon clicking the link to the survey found on the private investigator's Facebook profile, respondents were shown the three fake brands, Zanga chips, O So Da, and K8L. Each of the participants was asked the same questions upon being exposed to the three brand stimuli. After each section, the respondents were given the opportunity to add any comments they had about the brands.

IV. RESULTS

Hypothesis 1 stated that the greater the degree of congruity between a consumer's evaluation of two brands in the same food brand constellation, the more positive the audience's attitude will be towards the food brand constellation. Hypothesis 1 was not supported. A summary independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if higher congruity in the food pairing could predict brand attitudes towards the pairing. There was not a significant difference in the scores for brand evaluation 1 ($M=3.747$, $SD=1.226$) and brand evaluation 2 ($M=3.600$, $SD=1.201$) conditions; $t(1.365)=1.041$, $p = 0.3754$. These results suggest perceptions of a congruent or incongruent pairings are not significantly different with regards to positive brand attitudes.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the greater the degree of congruity between a consumer's evaluation of two brands in the same food brand constellation, the less likely they will discuss the pairing on social media. Hypothesis 2 was not supported. A summary independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if higher congruity in the food pairing could predict the intention to discuss the pairing online (eWOM). There was not a significant difference in the scores for eWOM 1 ($M=2.488$, $SD=1.203$) and eWOM 2 ($M=2.567$, $SD=1.292$) conditions; $t(-0.710)=1.154$, $p = 0.1268$. These results suggest perceptions of a congruent or incongruent pairings are not significantly different with regards to electronic word-of-mouth.

Hypothesis 3 stated that the greater the degree of congruity between a consumer's evaluation of two brands in the same food brand constellation, the less likely willingness

to pass along will occur. Hypothesis 3 was not supported. A summary independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if higher congruity in the food pairing could predict the intention to pass along on social media. There was not a significant difference in the scores for wpa1 (M=2.116, SD=1.108) and wpa2 (M=2.129, SD=1.142) conditions; $t(-0.137)=1.061$, $p = 0.3196$. These results suggest perceptions of a congruent or incongruent pairings are not significantly different when it comes to passing along content on social media.

Table 1. Hypotheses Testing.

Variable	Zanga & O So Da (Congruent Pairing)				Zanga & K8L (Incongruent Pairing)			
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p
<i>Brand Attitudes</i>	3.747	1.226	1.365	0.3754	3.6	1.201	1.365	0.3754
<i>e-WOM</i>	2.488	1.203	-0.71	0.1268	2.567	1.292	-0.71	0.1268
<i>Willingness to Pass Along</i>	2.116	1.108	-.0137	0.3196	2.129	1.142	-0.137	0.3196

V. DISCUSSION

Takeaway

In summary of the results, none of the independent samples t-tests conducted were significant, but the results were leaning in the direction of the hypotheses. Thus, it can be assumed that practitioners can leverage the level of congruity of food brand pairings to influence brand attitudes, positive electronic word-of-mouth and willingness to pass along on social media. The findings suggest that congruent pairings lead to more positive word-of-mouth and brand attitudes and that incongruent pairings can generate more passalong on social media.

Theoretical Implications

This study attempted to advance knowledge on congruity theory by studying the impact of congruity between two items in a brand constellation and its effects on brand attitudes, positive electronic word-of-mouth and willingness to pass along content on social media. Although none of independent samples t-tests were significant, the results were leaning in the direction of the hypotheses and reveals that congruity does have an impact on perception of brands combined a brand constellation. As aforementioned, research had shown that there needed to be a perceptual fit between an endorser and a brand for advertising messaging to be successful (Rifon et al., 2004). This study attempted to show that a sponsor brand can act as an endorser for a sponsored brand and that the same perceptual fit, in other words perception of congruity, was needed to do so.

The results suggest that it is accurate to an extent but more research is needed to support the theory advanced in this paper.

Managerial implications

Based on these findings, managers can pair different brands based on the results they are looking for. For example, if they are looking to create a combine brand campaign to generate positive brand attitudes using a brand pairing, they are more likely to be successful if the pairing is congruent. Also, if they want a pairing of brands to go viral, they are more likely to be successful if the two brands lack of congruity between them. Finally, If they are looking for more positive electronic word-of-mouth, they are more likely to be successful if the brands do have congruity between them.

Limitations and Future Research

To get more significant data, the survey should have exposed participants to only one of the two stimuli sample ads. Since this project focused on brand attitudes, participants should have only been exposed to one ad to avoid any order or priming effect. Another option would have been to randomize the order in which the sample ads were presented. This could have prevented any order or priming effect whilst exposing participants to both stimuli sample ads. Also, the sample could have been bigger to get more results and perhaps reach more significant findings.

Another issue was found in the survey upon collecting the results. Although the hypotheses ask about brand combinations, each of the brands was surveyed individually in the questionnaire with regards to brand attitudes and electronic word-of-mouth. To solve this issue, a variable was created to combine the results but the results might have been more significant if the survey had asked respondents for their attitude and their eWOM intentions towards each combined brand rather than each individual brand.

This study used fake brands to avoid any previous exposure to the stimuli brands used in the pairings. Results might have been more significant if the study had used real brands, especially with regards to pass-along on social media, as respondents feel stronger about brands they have had a relationship with. However, previous exposure to the brands could have biased the results with regards to brand attitudes towards the pairings.

An extension of this work could be done with social media post mock-ups using the aforementioned cleaner exposure sampling. Other product categories could be looked at. For example, it might be interesting to compare utilitarian products (like food) to hedonic products (such as experiential products).

Since some of the eWOM literature supported that online customers have stronger emotions towards video commercials, it would be relevant to conduct a similar experiment using video stimuli pairing ads rather than images. This could lead to more significant results that would support the theory suggested in this study. Finally, another way to take this study further would be to use two or more racially different samples to see if the perceptions of congruity are significantly different among different racial groups.

VI. APPENDIX

Congruent Stimuli

Zanga Chips are better with O So Da.



Double the Indulgence!

Incongruent Stimuli

Zanga Chips are better with K8L.



Double the Indulgence!

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